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RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH 7849
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DEPARTMENT FOR PA, NEA/ARN, INR/IC/CD, INR/R/MR:STHIBEAULT AND
JMCCARTER, VOA NEWS CA, NEA/PPD:CBOURGEOIS, AZAIBACK, AND
AFERNANDEZ, IIP/G/NEA-SA MDAVIDSON
WHITE HOUSE FOR NSC
CENTCOM FOR CCPA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KMDR](#) [PREL](#) [KPAO](#) [OPRC](#) [SY](#)

SUBJECT: Syria/Lebanon, Lantos, Iraq, Peace Conference (8/13)

11. Summary: Syrian papers on August 13 reported a statement by Kabalan Kabalan, Chairman of the Southern Lebanon Council on August 12 announcing that the Lebanese authorities started to execute a project to rebuild houses in the Lebanese southern towns of Qana, al-Qulaila and Seddiqin, destroyed by the latest Israeli aggression on Lebanon last summer. The re-construction project is being financed and implemented by Syria and expected to be completed after 6 months.

Papers also reported that the Syrian Jurists Association in Damascus announced on August 12 the formation of a committee to defend the Syrian workers rights in Lebanon. A statement made by the Association said that the committee will be based on the Human Rights Declaration approved by International and Arab labor organizations. The statement condemned violations against Syrian workers in Lebanon, calling on their families living in Lebanon to report on any breaches in this regard in order to defend and protect them.

Papers also featured a statement made on August 12 by Tom Lantos, a Democrat and Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the US House of Representatives, after talks with Israeli and Palestinian leaders in Jerusalem and the West Bank. Lantos is reported to have said that he sees little chance of a real breakthrough on a Palestinian state, either at a US-sponsored conference this year or before the end of President Bush's term. He is quoted as saying "While I understand that some people in the (US) Administration would like to see great achievements in the next few months, great achievements will not be forthcoming," and "This is not a task that a capable and committed Secretary of State can achieve in the time that is left for this administration."

End of summary.

12. Selected Headlines:

"Vice-President Al-Shara is to meet journalists tomorrow to review the latest political developments in the region" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 8/13)

"Syria to Fund a project rebuilding damaged houses in South Lebanon" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 8/13)

"The Jurists Association forms a committee to defend Syrian laborers

in Lebanon" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 8/13)

"Italian Prime Minister Prodi: Syria has a pivotal and active role in the region" (Government-owned Tishreen, 8/13)

"Five US soldiers killed in Iraq. A US report: Iraq is immersed in waves of weapons" (Government-owned Tishreen, 8/13)

"The Lebanese opposition is determined to proceed with its political project: We will not accept a president chosen by the governing team" (Government-owned Tishreen, 8/13)

"Israel warns against a US-Russian deal on Iran's nuclear program" (Independent al-Watan, 8/13)

"Lantos calls for maintaining Israeli supremacy: No chance to establish a Palestinian state" (Government-owned Tishreen, 8/13)

13. Editorial Block Quotes:

"Imaginary Ideas. But!"

Ali Nasrallah, a commentator in government-owned Al-Thawra, wrote (8/13): "Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Baraq said that the meetings between Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Palestinian President Mahmud Abbas are nothing more than public relations stunts and that the idea of a Palestinian-Israeli agreement before five years from now is fictitious.... Bush's ideas and the Roadmap plan are also fictitious ideas...."

"It is strange that while the champions and promoters of these distracting ideas soon reveal their true nature and abandon them, some Arabs, regrettably, insist on adhering to and defending the lie and the fictitious ideas although they do not have to do that...."

"In fact, some Arabs, instead of supporting the Palestinian people and trying to bring their political forces closer and to unify their positions, play the role of the instigator by taking the side of one party at the expense of the other parties. They directly help in weakening and breaking Palestinian ranks. Why? Perhaps because they find that defending lies and fictitious ideas appeal to them, serve their personal interests, and protect their entities more than defending and sticking to the just causes of their nation..."

"Bush's Autumn Meeting and Barak's Statement"

Muhyi-al-Din al-Muhammad, a commentator in government-owned Tishreen, wrote (8/13): "We wonder what Arabs expect from the peace meeting that President Bush has called for later this year.... Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak has stated that the Israeli army will not withdraw from the West Bank before at least five years...."

"If the Bush meeting in fall will be limited to the issue of peace between Palestinians and Israelis, what will it produce when Israel's leaders say publicly that they refuse to withdraw from the West Bank...?"

"Do Arab leaders who are enthusiastic about the Bush meeting in the fall and who are betting on its results need more clarification than Barak's clarifications? It is really regrettable that they need such clarification because they seek nothing other than Bush's satisfaction, even if he is in his political deathbed."

"Iraq Security and the Occupation's Responsibility"

Muhammad al-Khadir, a commentator in government-owned Al-Ba'th,

wrote (8/13): "Syria has offered everything it can to control its border with Iraq.... US accusations to Syria and other neighboring countries over the situation in Iraq are worthless as they seek to cover the miserable failure in that country....

"The occupation forces must shoulder their responsibilities as stated in international agreements, and must seriously start addressing the security situation through comprehensive political solutions ensuring an end to the occupation and a timetable for its withdrawal....

"Damascus plays an effective positive role in resolving all the hot issues in the region despite the campaigns of pressure and intimidation against Syria...."

"Indications of a New UN Role in Iraq"

Ahmad Dawwa, a commentator in government-owned Al-Thawra, wrote (8/13): "The United States agreed to give the United Nations a role in Iraq in light of the US failure to achieve any political progress in that country....

"The Bush administration has come to realize that Iraqis do not trust Americans as a party working for political accord....

"In principle, allowing the United Nations to play a political role in Iraq based on Resolution 1770, which the Security Council adopted unanimously, opens the door, even if narrowly, toward a new horizon

for dialogue among the Iraqi parties, especially since the United Nations enjoys confidence, unlike the occupation, which cannot be a neutral party at all." "

"But the success of the United Nations in playing this role is linked to its staying as far away as possible from the influence of the occupation and to the amount of freedom that the occupation grants the international organization....

"Any American interference in the form or content of this UN role will lead to its failure and will harm the United Nations, which the Iraqis partly blame for the occupation of Iraq and the arrival of the country at this tragic situation."

Corbin